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CIA choice—and challenge

Adm. Stansfield Turner, nominated by President Carter to be Central Intelligence Agency director, is an exceptional man. The former Rhodes scholar is known as an expert military analyst, an able leader and a man of broad philosophical and nonmilitary interests.

Such depth is needed at the CIA, where secrecy and deception are realities that can isolate narrow people from democratic reality. The country has seen the illegal deeds that occurred when the CIA ignored Congress and public opinion. It wants no more of that.

Carter went so far as to say that Turner "could be the next George Marshall." We'd like to think that. President Harry S. Truman called Marshall, the general turned secretary

of state, the greatest American of his time (an assessment history may well confirm).

But Turner need not be a Marshall to ensure that the CIA plays only its intended role. He should be willing to squash lawless proposals quickly, end the overclassification of documents and be both independent-minded and committed to constitutional principles. And he should sever his ties to the Navy to help emphasize that information he sends to the President will be unbiased.

Turner clearly has the professional competence needed in a CIA director. It's up to Congress, with thorough questioning, to make sure he has the healthy attitudes toward the spy business that are also needed.